



EMERGING CHURCH

Part 8 of Religion Saves

Pastor Mark Driscoll | February 24, 2008

You're listening to Religion Saves and Nine Other Misconceptions: a sermon series in which Pastor Mark Driscoll answers nine controversial questions about Jesus and Christianity. The following is a presentation of Mars Hill Church in Seattle. For more audio and video content, please visit Marshallchurch.org.

Well, howdy, Mars Hill. Good to see you. If you're new, my name's Mark, one of the Pastors here at the church, and we usually go through books of the Bible. Right now we're doing kind of a peculiar series where we let people post questions online and then votes. We got 893 questions, five-and-a-half-thousand comments, and 343,000 votes. We chose the top nine questions that were voted upon. We turned them into a series we call Religion Saves. Today is on the question of the emerging church, which, probably if you go to Mars Hill, you have no idea what that means, and you don't care, and – so I'll apologize in advance, because we have a sermon that has nothing to do with you. So I'll get through the questions, spend the last half in the Bible, which is all you really care about.

As far as this topic goes, as well, I'll put a blog up this week. It'll have a link to an article I did for the *Criswell Theological Review*. It'll have a lecture I did at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary on this issue. It'll have a link to the *Listening of Beliefs of Emerging Churches* book I contributed to. I do some of this stuff on this issue, and then – you could praise. Well, I got an article coming out for the *Christian Research Journal*. I think it's the cover story of the magazine this summer on the emerging church this issue, which is an extension of Hank Hanegraaff, the Bible answer man's Christian Research Institute and his radio program. So, I'll go ahead and pray, and we'll see if we got anything here that's of benefit to us, and glad to have you all with us and, for more information again, just check the blog at marshallchurch.org this week.

Father, we begin by acknowledging that you are a great God, that you've loved us well, that you have pursued and that you have found us through your Son, Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus, as we talk about your church, it is always my prayer that the church would be a second priority, and that you would be first priority, and that, really, the church is nothing more than the people who have met you and are thrilled to belong to you and want others to come and experience that same joy. And, so, as we study, Father, I do ask that you would send the Holy Spirit to illuminate our understanding of your Word and also to empower me to do a good job teaching something that I normally wouldn't teach at Mars Hill, but in your providence I believe that it is appointed for me to teach this, and I thank you for the pastors who are joining us early for the conference. I pray this would be of help to them, as well as the people who call this church home, and, so, Holy Spirit, we ask that you would help us to learn in Jesus' good name. Amen.

Well here is the question. I'll start by telling you this. There's the internal ministry of Mars Hill Church – our six campuses. Our sixth campus is opening shortly downtown and you can pray for Pastor Tim Gatos. They had their morning, sort of, rough launch this morning, and then they have their evening service tonight. They officially launch on March 16th. They were running cable through his office for the computers this week, and the crack pipe fell through the ceiling tile and broke on his desk, so that pretty much tells you where we're at with our downtown campus. It was an old club with go-go dancer tables and the whole thing, and, so, you know, pray for Pastor Tim.

So, our internal ministry is, you know, scattered across our six campuses. Our external ministry includes an online audience that is about 10 times the size of Mars Hill. So every week I'll preach, and then 10 times the number who hear it at one of our campuses listen online. That includes books and conferences and church planting and other things we do, externally, and I preach in the church about 40 to 42 Sundays a year, and about the same number of sermons that I preach here, I preach outside of the church at different conferences and churches around the country and around the nation.

And, so, what happens is, when we opened up this Q&A session, many of those people who, you know, are pastors and leaders and interested in what's going on in the global church, they're the ones who really came up with this question, and my guess is no one at Mars Hill Church actually voted for this question, because we don't use language like emerging church. People come in. They'll say, "Oh, are you an emerging church?" and our people are like, "I don't know. I have a Bible. It's awesome, and Jesus is alive. What team does that put me on?" That's all we really care about, but, that being said, I'll apologize to all the Mars Hill people, but here is the question and we're answering it for all of our online friends, including all the bloggers.

So, here is the question: "What can traditional or established churches learn from quote-unquote emerging churches? What can be learned?" Well, I'll start by defining the teams. I'll tell you that a traditional, or an established church – I define in my book *Confessions* in a couple different ways, but, simply put, these are some of the hallmarks of a traditional church. The first is that missions isn't something you do in your city or in your country. Missions is overseas. So you send Americans to Africa or you send Americans to China. Missions is over there, and we believe it's both here and there, but the traditional church sees it as over there. Secondly, the culture that they worked in was primarily modern, and it was the result of a thousand-year reign of what we'll call Christendom.

The result was that, for much of this nation's history, most people were raised with some experience in church. Most people went to church, and, furthermore, the culture was primarily Christian in value if not in belief. So people were heterosexual. They'd get married. They'd have kids. Sex outside of marriage was generally frowned upon, culturally speaking. Sunday, you know, businesses were shut down because that's a Christian day and people don't need to go to businesses. That's a day of Sabbath, so then people would put on their best clothes. Dad would put on his best suit. Mom would put on her dress, and the kids would all get dressed up and Sunday was going-to-church-meeting day, and your day was devoted to the Lord.

And that was the general world, so the result was that most people, when you said, "God," they knew something about the God of the Bible. When you said, "Jesus," they'd heard about him, if they didn't already know him, and the expectation was we're basically a Christian nation, and people are supposed to go to church. That was the context in which the modern church was built, and then, when you would go to a church service, generally speaking, the building was considered sacred and holy. It's special place. You take your hat off if you're a guy. You dress up in your best attire. You don't come casually, and it's going for a formal meeting with God, and then you would have – sometimes the pastors would wear a robe, which I don't, unless it's like a black Jedi Knight one. I think that would be kind of cool. I would actually go for that.

And sometimes there would be like a hand-bell choir. I know if you're at Mars Hill, you're like, "I don't know what you're talking about." Me neither, but this is what I've heard from those who were alive in those days. Additionally, you know, there'd be a choir. You'd sing from a hymnal. You'd sing older musical style from – I don't know what era, and sometimes an organ would accompany, but you wouldn't get drums, anything like that. Oh, that's very, very, very controversial. That's sort of the traditional church with certain modifications. I'll take an excurses with you and then I'll come back to the topic. Here's my story. I didn't grow up in Protestantism at all. I grew up Irish Catholic. My dad was a union drywaller named Joe and, like Jesus' daddy, Joe, my dad swung a hammer for a living. So I grew up in south Seattle.

I was born in Grand Forks, North Dakota. As soon as my parents could afford a full tank of gas, we left North Dakota and we came to Washington and I grew up in south Seattle, going to an Irish Catholic kind of church, and I went until fifth, sixth, and seventh grade, and then I also went from public school to Catholic school, which, if you've been to Catholic school, I'm sorry. It's no fun at all. There's nuns who – they beat you. Just – yeah, it's scary, and, so, I went to Catholic school fifth, sixth, seventh grade, and I was actually an altar boy. I would accompany the priest with mass and all of that. I didn't have a bad experience. I just got bored with it. Didn't care, and so I begged my parents, "Please send me back to the public school," and, also, I refused to go to church anymore.

And sometimes my mom, Deb – she really loved me and still does and we get along great, and if you're here, mom, hi, and my mom, though, she would say, "Markey." She always calls me Markey. She still calls me Markey. Don't do that, but my mom does, and she can, because she's my mom, and my mom would say, "Markey, you gotta go to church," because she was afraid I was going to hell, and the reason she felt that way is because I was going to hell. And, so, occasionally I'd go with my mom, basically out of guilt. Like, "All right, mom. I love you. It's a good place to take a nap. I'm feeling tired. Let's do it." So occasionally I'd go with my mom and I'd take a nap during the Catholic Church service, and then, eventually, I just stopped going altogether.

Fast-forward – 17 years of age in high school – meet a cute gal and really liked her and so she bought me a Bible. Her daddy was a pastor, and so then fast-forward to college. I'm reading that Bible and it dawns on me: I'm really not a Christian and I – God saves me. Right? If you're a Calvinist, God saves me. If you're an Armenian, I gave my life to the Lord at the age of 19 while in college, however this works. So I became a Christian in college at the age of 19 and then God called me into ministry and spoke to me and said, "Marry Grace, this woman." The moral of the story is she buys you a Bible, buy her a ring. Call it a deal. So God said, "Marry Grace. Plant churches, train men and preach the Bible," so, okay, that's what I'm doing. So grace and I got married at 21, graduated at 22; moved back to Seattle.

Worked at a church as a college intern for about a year, year-and-a-half, and then started a small Bible study in our rental home in Wallingford and decided that this would be Mars Hill Church. Now I'd never been a member of a church. I'd never been a pastor in a church. Didn't go to Bible College; didn't go to seminary. I preached once in a church. It didn't go very well. Some people got up and left halfway through the sermon. Some things never change, and, so I thought, "Well with this breadth of experience, it's definitely time to start my own church at the age of 25." So Grace and I started this little Bible study in our home.

We say it started about the size of a Mormon family. There's about 10, 12 of us gathered together, and pretty soon it kind of outgrew the living room, so we moved into a church and we had a Bible study at night and it kept growing, and it became Mars Hill Church. Well, we started in October of 1996, and it was around that time I got a call from an organization called Leadership Network. They're still friends to this day and I love them very much, and they said, "Could you come speak at our conference we have for young pastors?" I didn't know there were pastors' conferences. I'd never been to one. I thought, "Sure, whatever."

So I went down to Mt. Herman, California – nice conference center – and the topic was Generation X, which is a ridiculous topic, because the assumption is that all people who are born between this year and this year are exactly the same, which is not true. People are much more complicated than birthday: the way they think; their experience; their culture. It's way more complicated – I mean, it's just a weird way to break a church down. You may as well choose height. You know? I mean, if you're just gonna pick random abstract – "Oh, you're over six foot? No, you're a Baptist, you know? You're under six foot, you're an Episcopalian. Sorry, it's like the rides at the fair. You gotta be this tall." And, I mean, just – it's weird ways to divide people that didn't make any sense.

So I got up and I lectured on post-modernism and the shift from the modern to the post-modern world and I did my philosophical undergrad on Cartesian Epistemology, Descartes and his theory of knowledge and lo and behold it was interesting because – and, again, get this. This is 1997. All of

a sudden, now, it's really a big issue. 10 years later, because Christians are always about 10 years late. Always, right? I mean, we're gonna be into, you know, I don't know what, like glam rock pretty soon. I mean, we're almost there, you know? So what happened then is the phone started ringing off the hook, and now I'm into the evangelical subculture that I have no experience in. I'm not in the denomination. You know, I'm just a guy planting a church, and, at this point, we're running maybe 60, 80, 100 people. I don't know. It was not impressive.

Most of them were like drunk, Indy rockers who still hadn't finished rehab. No one was tithing. The whole thing was a goat rodeo. It was just an absolute nightmare, and then I start getting these calls. "Hey, could you come consult for this denomination; speak at this conference; do this television interview; do this radio interview?" and I'm at home, literally, because we have no office, no secretary, and the phone rings to my house, and we don't have a church line and a house line, because we can't afford both. So there's one line at my house and I answer the phone, "Yes, could we," – these are the calls I'm taking. "Could we schedule an interview for Pastor Mark with this radio station or this television show?" I say, "Well, hold on. Let me check." I'm like, "Ugh. Hello?" Yeah, you know what I mean? You know, it's just weird.

And I'm not making any money for three years at Mars Hill. I'm working for free, so I start taking these speaking gigs to make ends meet. So I go on the road and we get this little team of speakers together, and then Leadership Network is hosting it. Then they hire a guy named Doug Pagitt to kind of run it. Chris Seay's already a guy on that team. Pretty soon there's couple guys loosely connected – guy named Spencer Burke; guy named Dan Kimball. Tony Jones and Andrew Jones and then another guy named Brian McLaren gets put on the team and we're kind of traveling and speaking together, and then we go out to dinner and have these conversations. So what is now the big conversation was actually a little conversation years ago, and I just decided, at that point, I'm out.

They left Leadership Network. Started something Terra Nova – called Terra Nova. Then it morphed into something called Emergent Village, which you may have heard of. There's a lot of controversy around that organization. Most of those guys are still involved and that's when I got out for a couple reasons. One: young, immature, arrogant, mouthy, cursing, bad-temper – I just had to go home and grow up and learn and change and repent and grow in humility. I wasn't ready to tell everybody how to do anything. Secondly, my church was such a wreck, right? I mean, I remember standing up before a large denomination and one of the pastors said, "Well, how do we do church like yours?" I'm like, "Don't do it like mine. Mine – nobody gives. I mean, everybody's living together." Right, you know?

Why are you up there? Good question. Amazing question I have no answer for. Whatever you do, don't do what I – I realize I don't have a church that's exemplary in any way. I got nothing to say. Thirdly, my wife was giving birth to our oldest daughter, Ashley, and I need to go home, be with my wife and my kid. The church needed my time, energy, attention. It was a total mess. Young, messed-up, goofed-up church plant, and, lastly, the theological discussions we were having just really frustrated me, to be totally frank with you. We'd be eating dinner and they'd be like, "All right, let's talk. Let's have a conversation," and don't get me wrong. I like conversations. I got a wife. I got two daughters. I have them all the time, but these are bad conversations.

These are the kind of conversations, like Genesis 3, where Satan comes and asks, "Did God really say?" I don't like those kind of conversations, especially with pastors. They're asking questions like, "Is it wrong to be gay?" Yeah. Like are we voting? Like, are you serious? Like, I thought this issue was settled like in, you know — I'm getting a room by myself tonight. You guys all scare me. I don't know what we're doing here. You know? The questions like – so we're eating dinner one night and they're like, "All right, do we really believe in hell?" I'm like, "Hell yeah, we do." You know – what the? Why are we talking about this? I thought we were all Christian pastors. So I left and I came home to do my own thing and started Mars Hill.

Well, what started out as a little conversation – sort of a couple guys on the dirt path saying, "Oh, where are we gonna go with the church?" has led to a multi-lane highway. Now, I'll tell you what we all agree on. One is that the world has changed, right? That heterosexual people who grew up in church and have a lot of kids and go to church on Sunday, by rule, that's not the norm anymore. Right? I mean, it's just not. We live in a world where half the people are single in our country, so, you know, it's not just family-friendly. Most people are living in the city, not in the suburbs. Most people didn't grow up in the church. They don't have any church background, especially in cities like Seattle. It's not even post-Christian. It's still pre-Christian. So the world has changed. Secondly, that older ministry methods don't work. They just don't work.

I mean, I know a church, not too long ago, spent three-and-a-half-million dollars on a new organ, a new organ. Not like a heart or a lung – something you really need, you know? A different kind of organ – three-and-a-half-million bucks, and I asked one of the pastors. Say, "Why did you do it?" Said, "Well, our attendance is down." I'm like, "Well that'll fix it right there. That'll help. You're gonna want some guys to park the horse and buggies, too." I mean, you gotta think all this through, you know? I mean – what the? I – and, you know, and the old ministry methods aren't working and then, additionally, what we all agree on is that the church needs to assume a missionary posture. That it's not just other nations that are lost and have bizarre culture that don't know Jesus and need missionaries. That's here, too.

If you took, statistically, all the non-Christian in America, they would comprise – some would say the fourth largest nation on the earth, right? There's plenty of non-Christians in our own culture. Now, here's where we disagree. What I will use is two hands, and I believe doctrine – belief – goes in one hand, and practice or methodology goes in another. The problem with Fundamentalist Christianity is everything goes into two hands. We believe the Bible and Jesus and everybody's a sinner, and apart from Jesus you don't go to heaven. He's our great God and Savior. If you don't believe in Jesus, you're gonna go to hell. They put all the doctrine in the closed hand, which I say, "Great." But then they put the methods in the closed hand, so it's just really inflexible, rigid, outdated, old-school, no fun. They call themselves Fundamentalists, which is a lie, because they're no fun at all, and everything goes into those two hands.

Now Liberals come along and they say, "Well, we're very open with our methodology and style and music and how to love people and be involved in the culture," and they're also very open with their doctrine. "Oh, we're not sure if the Bible's God's Word. We're not sure if Jesus is God. We're not

sure if anybody's going to hell. We're not sure about much of anything," and our approach has always been two-handed. What we believe is timeless and what we do should be timely. That we need to be very strong with our Bible-believing doctrinal convictions, and very flexible – meaning wherever the Bible gives us freedom, we need to use it.

So I use the language that we're theologically conservative and culturally – I didn't say politically – culturally liberal, meaning there's a lot of freedom here, and we don't agree on these things because many are two-handed. "Oh, let's do new kind of church and also let's invent new kinds of Christians." Say, "No, no, no." I don't know. Those are called cults, right? The new Christians are cults. We're supposed to be old Bible-believing, Jesus-loving Christians that the Christianity doesn't change. Now, the way it's expressed and culturally demonstrated does change. Well, all of that, as my introduction to the four lanes on the highway. The first is the emerging evangelicals. By evangelicals, I mean that doctrinally they believe that the Bible's God's Word. We're sinners. Jesus was born of a virgin. Lived without sin; died on a cross; rose for our salvation.

That there really is heaven; there really is hell: the big issues; and emerging evangelicals tend to do kind of hip, cool church and church within a church and church planting and guys that are in these – this lane are like Dan Kimball, who's a friend, and Rick McKinley, who's a pastor and a friend, and John Burke, who's a good guy and a friend, and Donald Miller, who wrote the book *Blue Like Jazz* – kind of blew up on him. He's a good guy and a friend, and these guys are just trying to say, "Well, we're not trying to change all of Christianity. We're just trying to figure out how to make church and Christianity more relevant, more applicable, for people who otherwise have no interest in Jesus or church." We would disagree with them on a few things. Lot of them have women pastors and such, but, for the most part, that lane's fine.

We love them. It's cool. All's well. All right? Now, the next team is the house church evangelicals, and, again, doctrinally they're Christian brothers and sisters. We were to disagree on a few minor things, but no reason to run their car off the road, and the house-church thing is they say, "You know, let's get rid of buildings and pastors and preachers like me and," – to which I say, "No," but, anyways, they would say that and they would say, "Let's stop having big church. Let's do little church. Let's meet in houses and coffee shops and let's just do 10, 20, 30 people max and let's do house church."

They would say, "It works around the world," and I would say, "Yeah, it tends to work in countries like China where Christianity's outlawed and it has to go underground. I don't think it works best for this culture," and they would say, "But it's Biblical." And I would say, "Well, the early church, in Acts 2, they met from house-to-house to be sure, and they met in the Temple courts for large meetings," and I would say Mars Hill's built that way. We do our large meetings on Sunday. We meet in homes. Basically, house church is with meals and Bible study and prayer and care and share and love and community and relationship during the course of the week, and they're not trying to change what we believe. They're just trying to innovate a new style for church.

Thirdly, the emerging reformers – this is my team, and so I'll explain it to you in great depth. These are people who believe all of the evangelical distinctives and there's trying to make the church more relevant, accessible, culturally-connected. A lot of us are involved in church planting. That's our Acts 29 Network that we're privileged to be a part of with some great guys. This includes other church-planting networks like Dr. Tim Keller's in New York and Sovereign Grace with C.J. Mahaney. We love the reformed theological traditions. So we love John Calvin and Martin Luther and the Puritans and Jonathan Edwards and Charles Hadden Spurgeon, one of my personal favorites. We like the early founders of evangelicalism 50 years ago: Billy Graham, John Stott, J.I. Packer, Francis Schaeffer.

Present-day, we love missiologists like Ed Stetzer. We love preachers like Dr. John Piper. We love theologians like Dr. Wayne Grudem and Dr. D.A. Carson. I'm privileged to really know all these guys. They're wonderful guys, by the way, and that would be our team. We believe what the evangelicals believe, and then a few more distinctives, and we tend to only have male pastors – I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 encourages us in that direction. The emerging house-church guys, they're lead by a guy like Neil Cole, who wrote the book *Organic Churches* and Frost and Hirsch, two Australian missiologists. This team – or this lane, I should say – I'm kind of in it. Matt Chandler, who's here to preach this week, and my buddy Darrin Patrick – these guys are both friends.

This is kind of our lane. This is kind of where we're at, and what – it tends to be different from older reformed theology in that worship is pretty free and we tend to be charismatic, meaning all the gifts are for today; speaking in tongues; healing. We believe in all of that and we tend to be a little more loose about it, and what happened is in September 2006, Christianity Today wrote an article saying the two hot theologies among young pastors are this emerging reformers – our lane – and then the emerging liberals – the lane that I was somewhat connected to and left, and I would say my problem with this team is not that they're trying to find innovative ways to do church, but they're also calling into question many Christian doctrines that should not be questioned, particularly by those who claim to be pastors.

They'd say, "Oh, we're just asking questions." Asking questions: is Jesus fully God? Did he die on the cross in our place for our sins? Is anybody really going to hell? Do you need Jesus to go to heaven? Is sex outside of marriage, including homosexuality, sinful? And on many of these issues, they won't answer the questions. Now, the leaders in this lane are men like Brian McLaren who I love, and I know all of these guys except for Rob Bell. I know all the guys in all the lanes, and I would tell you, personally, they're all gracious guys. I love them. They've not been mean, cruel, or unkind to me in any way, so it's not a personal beef, but it's concern for the content of their instruction. So it include Brian McLaren, Doug Pagitt, and Rob Bell, who also has a church called Mars Hill – no way affiliated with us – in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

And my concern is – like a guy like Bell – I mean, in his book *Velvet Elvis*, he basically says, you know, "If we get rid of, for example, the virgin birth of Jesus, we don't really lose anything." I say, "We lose the Bible and Jesus. That's a lot. That's pretty much everything. You're sawing off the branch we're all sitting on. If the Bible lies about Jesus, we've lost everything. Jesus' mother is declared in the Bible to be a virgin. That's what it says. If we lose that, we lose a lot." Guy like McLaren won't answer the homosexuality question. He won't answer the question of the cross or hell. All these questions they continually duck. I asked Doug Pagitt – and, by the way, they're part of something called the Emerging Village – not an organization that

I'm favorable toward, and Rob Bell has McLaren and Pagitt cover his pulpit and preach for him.

So they're all working together to some degree, and I asked Doug Pagitt – we contributed to a book – there's five of us – Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches and National Public Radio kind of hosted a debate, discussion, conversation. Can't debate anymore, you have to converse. People's feelings get hurt, then they blog, and so we had a conversation, and, so, I asked him – I said, "Is," – and Doug's a friend and a good guy, a guy that I personally enjoy. I said, "Is it okay to be a homosexual and a Christian?" He said, "Sure." It's like, really? Really? I mean, they're calling into question or outright dismissing Christian doctrine that has been established for a really long time, and so I would say the three lanes that I listed first: they're friends. I don't have any, you know, grave concerns, maybe some minor disagreements.

This fourth lane of the Emerging Village, I think they've totally gotten off the highway and they're lost out in the woods. Now some of you who are here, then, are pastors, because we have the conference coming up, and many of you are Mars Hill folk and you would wonder: what is the result of this? Well, I'll give you a quote from Dr. Al Mohler. He's the President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He says this: "When it comes to issues such as the exclusivity of the Gospel; the identity of Jesus Christ as both fully human and fully divine; the authority and character of Scripture as written revelation; and the clear teachings of Scripture concerning issues such as homosexuality; this movement simply refuses to answer the question."

Mohler further asserts that the – quote – "Emerging Movement – the Emergent Movement represents a significant challenge to Biblical Christianity." I agree with that. I think, at best, it's new Liberalism. At worst, it could be cultish and going in a completely new religious direction. That being said, some of you who are here wondering, "Why are we talking about this?" Because I have to answer the questions. So now I'm going to move on, because, you know what? We don't care, and, you know what? You shouldn't care, because what can happen is you get so messed up and so concerned. It's so easy for Christians to wonder, "What's this Christian saying? What team am I on and what does this guy think and what does this blogger say about this blogger?" I'll tell you what.

Maybe this is what you can learn from the emerging church, you know? What false doctrine is – maybe that's a good thing to learn, and what I would tell you is that when we started Mars Hill Church, I didn't start as part of the emerging church, and I wasn't reading books about the emerging church. And I wasn't trying to figure out what the other churches were doing. The two things we really care about – I really care about – are Jesus and the Bible. So, for me, I'm looking at the life of Jesus, reading my Bible, trying to figure out, "Lord God, what do you want us to do as Mars Hill Church in the city of Seattle? What is our mission and call and message?" So, that being said, who cares what the emerging church is doing? It's a junk-drawer category for all kinds of different people. It's highly confusing.

I'm not even sure that the description is any more of benefit or use, so please go to Acts Chapter 17 and we'll talk about something that matters. Now, in Acts Chapter 17, this is where we launched Mars Hill Church, and this is Paul's ministry at Mars Hill. So this is actually where we get the name of our church, and, in sharing this with you, I haven't preached this text since 1996 – October of '96. This was the opening-night text of Mars Hill. So, what I would say is, for those of you that are here – both of you who are here and care about this question, and then those who would listen online, my answer would be: we didn't start reading all the books on the emerging church. We started by reading the Bible. We didn't worry about what everyone was doing. We were trying to figure out what Jesus was up to, and that's all that really matters at the end of the day.

Names, titles, teams, they come and go. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So I'll tell you about Jesus. This is where I get excited. The rest is just stuff I talk about at conferences. I don't know why. So here's the deal. Jesus is God. Now we're into something good. Jesus is God and he came into human history as a missionary, right? God made us. We sinned against him. He pursued us in love. His name is Jesus, and he came as a missionary in culture. He says 39 times in John's Gospel, "The Father has sent me." That's a missionary. He left his culture in heaven, came to earth. He spoke the language. He ate the food. He wore the clothes. He celebrated the holidays. He participated in the customs of that culture, okay? And then, eventually, he lives without sin.

He's born of a virgin. Lives without sin, eventually goes to the cross, and there he substitutes himself and he dies in our place for our sins, paying our debt to God, and paying our price for our salvation. Three days later, he rises and he ascends back into heaven, and before he left, in John Chapter 17, he prayed the longest prayer of any recorded prayer of Jesus in the Bible, and he prayed that you and I, who are Christian – and I know – not all of you are – he prayed that we'd be missionaries in John 17. He says, "Father, as you have sent me, so I am sending them, the Christians." And Jesus prayed just prior to that in John 17:15 that we would not be Fundamentalists or Liberals. He says, "Father, my prayer is not that you take them out of the world."

See, that's Fundamentalism: leave the world; turn off your TV; throw out your MP3 player; you know, find a good piece of land; put up barb wire; load your gun; get some canned goods; read books on the rapture; freak your kids out because the end is near. Right? That's classic Fundamentalism, right? That's classic Fundamentals: separate from the culture, withdraw.

He says, "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world. My prayer is that you would protect them," Jesus says, John 17:15, "From Satan, the evil one," because Satan's at work in the world and he wants us to not think Biblically, not act Biblically, not live in holiness – live compromised lives of sin, and that's classic Liberalism, and Jesus says, "I don't want you to be Fundamentalists, and I don't want you to be Liberals. I want you to be missionaries on the earth, in the culture, but not sinning, as I was, following in my example." Then, to lead that charge, after he ascended into heaven, Jesus came back down and saved a guy named Sol. You may know him as Paul, and appointed him as the missionary to the gentiles: me, you, us, the non-Jews.

And, so, what we need to do is look at Jesus and then Paul as our example of what it means, individually and corporately, to take a missionary posture, and, to do that, we'll go to a city called Athens, Acts 17:16. Now, while Paul was waiting for them in Athens – so the first thing is, you've gotta pay

attention to what's going on in the city. Athens was a great city. That's where Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Alexander the Great had descended from. It was the heart of western civilization for many generations. It is almost impossible to underestimate the influence of Greek philosophy and thought, even to the present day — and Paul went to the city, and this is incredibly important. Cities are marked by density and diversity: more kinds of people closely packed together than suburban and rural areas.

If you've been at Mars Hill for any amount of time, you've heard all of this before. There needs to be churches wherever there are people because God loves everyone, but cities are most strategic because culture is made in the city. The thought had been, in previous generations, that culture gets made on the east coast, i.e. New York, the west coast, i.e. L.A., and that it would come into the middle of the nation. Now we know that culture gets made in certain, what they call "creative class cities", like Seattle, San Francisco, Portland, Minneapolis, Denver, Atlanta, Houston, South Beach, Manhattan.

Certain cities are culture-making centers, which means Christians have, in large part, abandoned the cities and are in every way then downstream from culture, and they'll complain, "We don't like what's on TV. We don't like what's on the radio. We don't like where culture is heading. We don't like what the politicians are offering." Well the answer is, like Paul, then, you need to get into the city, because in the city is where culture is made and it flows from the city downstream to the suburban and rural areas, and even if a church is ministering in a suburban or rural area, it still needs to pay attention to the city and send resources in to plant churches to reach the city, because in the city: that's where the students are. That's where the universities are. That's where the lawyers are. That's where the bankers are.

That's where the television stations, radio stations, newspapers, the media gatekeepers, the bands, the record labels, the concert venues, the art galleries, the fashion industry — everything is in the city. Transportation comes into the city. Good and services come from the city. If you wanna change the world, you've gotta reach the city. So much so that Paul's ministry was from city to city in the book of Acts. He almost overlooks the outlying areas altogether by the — about 300 A.D., the historians tell us that half of the people who lived in Roman cities were Christians. 90 percent of those who lived on the farm were Pagan, and Pagan means "one who lives on the farm".

Some people today are freaking out saying, "Oh my, goodness. We live in a non-Christian world and it's all urban and everyone lives in the city. What are we gonna do?" and my answer is: this is nothing new. This is exactly how Christianity started: in a very spiritual, not-Christian urban environment; nothing new. He goes on, then. "His spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols." First thing: pay attention to the city. Second thing: look for the idolatry. They were each made to worship, and the question is not, "Will we worship?" but, "Who or what will we worship? If we don't worship Jesus, we will still worship our time, our talent, our treasure. It will go to food. We'll worship our stomach. It will go to relationships. We'll worship a person.

It will go to our family, to our children, to our job, to our intellect, to our income. We worship sex and power and fame and money and glory, and what that means is that, for some people, a restaurant is a temple. For some people, a sports venue is a temple. For some people, a flat-screen TV is a temple and, for some people, another human being who's willing to be in it with them is a temple, and we go to there to worship, to give our self to the person, the thing, the cause, the experience, and it's easier to see idolatry in someone else's culture than it is in our own. We tend to be blind to it. Just see it as entertainment or hobby or as a personal preference for cultural enjoyment. Go to the city and see what people are doing with their time, talent, and treasure.

Who or what are they worshipping other than Jesus? And then his third point is to talk to people about Jesus. Verse 17: "So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there." Paul demonstrates two methods. This is what a missionary does. For those who are Jewish, they believe in the Old Testament, so he reasons from the Scriptures. You'll see in a minute, for those who do not have a background in the Bible, he reasons to the Scriptures from the culture, but what he does, nonetheless, is he talks to people about Jesus. If you're at Mars Hill, we want you talk to your friends, family, coworkers about Jesus.

If you're not a Christian, we would love to talk to you about Jesus, and what I find curious among churches is that they ask questions like, "What do emerging churches do to reach lost people?" and my answer is: generally nothing. Emerging churches are taking the disgruntled children of evangelical mega-churches and reorienting them into cool, hip services where they complain about their parents' church. That's not the point. The point is to get people who don't know Jesus and introduce them to Jesus, which mean, rather than reading books about how bad the church is, it's better to go out and talk to non-Christians about Jesus. So, if you're here and you're not a Christian, we'd love to talk to you about Jesus.

If your Christian friend brought you, ask them questions on the way home about Jesus, and if you are a person who goes to Mars Hill Church, talk to your neighbors about Jesus. Don't worry about what every emerging church or whatever group is doing. Across the street from you, upstairs from you in the dorm or apartment complex is somebody. Go up there and say, "Howdy." Talk to them. I know it's a crazy, innovative, revolutionary idea, but you could talk to them. You might not even have to text message. You could actually do it face-to-face and have an old-school conversation. Just something to pray about — and the point is, you go into the city. You see what's going on and you talk to people about Jesus. Now, when you do, some will criticize you. Take it from me. That happens here in Verse 18.

"Some of the Epicurean and stoic philosophers also conversed with Paul and some said, 'What does this babbling wish to say?' Others said, 'He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities,'" because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. As soon as you say, "Jesus is God. He died for your sins and he rose for your salvation," some people are gonna criticize you, make fun of you. "You're an idiot. Didn't you go to college? That's old thinking. We're into the new spirituality." Now, if you go to Mars Hill, you need to know this. I have lots of critics, praise be to God, and, additionally, they tend to fall into two categories: people who are very sinful and people who are very religious, which, in some ways, is the same guy, but just with a different outlook.

Okay, now, because I believe that Jesus calls sinners to repent of sin and religious people to repent of religion, and when he calls sinners to repent – that’s when you say, “Stop sleeping with your girlfriend. Stop stealing. Stop lying. Start reading your Bible. Stop worshipping false gods. Stop being involved in Wicca.” Whatever it is you’re into, if it’s not Jesus, it’s the wrong thing. All the religious people say, “Yay, get them,” and then you look at the religious people. You say, “You’re not very loving. You’re not humble. You’re not nice. You’re the guys who murdered Jesus.”

They don’t take that well at all – and Jesus called sinners to repent of sin and religious people to repent of religion, and the sinners actually love Jesus and the religious people tended to hate him the most, which means if you’re at Mars Hill, it’ll be very confusing, because, truthfully, I have gotten shot by people nationally who are all about free sex and pornography and Fundamentalist pastors who preach out of the King James Bible. Okay? I’m a unifier, not a divider. I bring together the dude in the dress and the dude in a suit into a coalition. That’s my gift to the body of Christ. Okay? And it makes it fun, at least for me, but you’re gonna get critics of some sort or kind, right? You’re gonna get – and that’s okay, and some people say, “I don’t wanna talk about Jesus because somebody’s not gonna like it.”

No, you say, “I love you. I’m trying to be humble. You may disagree with me, but let me talk to you about Jesus, and you could criticize me and I’m gonna love you some more, because Jesus loves you. That’s why.” Additionally, Verse 19, “And they took hold of him.” They grabbed him, “Brought him to the Aeropagus,” – that’s Mars Hill. That’s where we get our name. Saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting, for you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know, therefore, what these things mean. Now all the Athenians,” – could substitute Seattleites – “And the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.” All right? Use the conversational portals and outlets to get into the cultural discourse. That’s the next point.

In that day, Mars Hill was the court where the Athenian philosophers would gather, perhaps 30 men, and they would sort of oversee the teaching in the city. Socrates had been there many years before Paul, and so everyone would gather and they’d just talk about all the latest ideas. This is their version of talk radio, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, blogging. This is their version, which means if you’re here and you’re a Christian, you’re a missionary, right? Wherever people are talking, conversing, you – coffee shop, home, you know, Texas Holdem tourney – whatever you’re into. You’re – I don’t know, you’re out for dinner visiting with your friends. Wherever the conversations of life and discourse occur, Christians are to be there lovingly, graciously talking about Jesus, and this includes online, right?

That’s why, truthfully, we put as much as we can for free online. That’s why we have a website. That’s why we’re at iTunes. That’s why we’re at Facebook. That’s why we’re at MySpace. That’s why we’re at YouTube. That’s why we put out as much as we can, because those are networks and communities where people get together for conversation, and, to be honest with you, I’m shocked at what a big deal it is. Again, 10 times more people listen online than attend at Mars Hill, and like I started a Facebook account, which is weird, because I’m not in college and I already have a wife, so I don’t need to meet girls, but I started a Facebook account and I got like four-and-a-half thousand friends. Now not friends like we’re gonna get matching sweatshirts and ride a tandem bike.

I think we should have a word other than friends, but friends with people who got lot of questions about Jesus, and some are asking for churches and books and it’s just an opportunity to further discuss Jesus and to help some people come to know him. Paul did that, and, so, in our discussion, you know, coffee shops and dinner parties and hanging out with your friends and getting in a sports rec. lead and having a community group and opening up your home and bringing over your family friends and neighbors. These are all little Mars Hill – little conversation portals to talk to people about Jesus. The next point, then, he’s gonna talk about — or we’re going to see, rather, is him contextualizing the Gospel.

Verse 22: “So Paul, standing in the midst of the Aeropagus,” – or Mars Hill – “Said, ‘Men of Athens,’” – he says the same thing Aristotle said. “‘I perceive that in every way you’re very religious.’” Some of your translations will say, “You’re really spiritual.” Their day was very spiritual, but not into Jesus; just like our day is very spiritual, but not into Jesus. I have spoken with innumerable people, and I’ll ask them questions like, “Are you spiritual?” “Oh, yes, I’m very spiritual.” “What do you do?” “I pray.” “Who do you pray to?” “God.” “Well, who’s God?” “I don’t know.” They don’t know. They like to pray and they don’t know who they’re praying to.

“Why do you, you know, wanna be a good steward to the environment and recycle?” “Well, I believe God made the earth and we need to take care of it.” “Okay, great. Which God?” “I don’t know. Whatever God made the – I don’t know who he is.” There are a lot of very spiritual people doing what they perceive to be very spiritual things, but they don’t know anything about Jesus. It was the same way for Paul in Athens. So he says, “I see you’re very spiritual. I see you’re very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown God.’” Let me explain to you what happened here. A plague broke out. People are dying. Their Greek view of the gods and goddesses is that they’re mean, capricious and nasty. So they think the gods must be punishing us.

So they decided, “Well let sheep go. Wherever the sheep lay down, we’ll sacrifice the sheep to the god of that area to appease them so that the plague won’t continue.” Well, the sheep laid down in some areas where they didn’t know where there were any gods or not, and so they build little altars to the unknown god and sacrificed for that unknown deity. So, as Paul’s walking into town, he’s like, “Unknown god, unknown god, unknown god.” It’s no different than Seattle. It’s no different than Seattle or most major cities in the nation where people believe in God and don’t know who he is. Goes on to way, “‘What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.’” I’ll explain to you who God is.

“‘The God who made the world and everything it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man nor is served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he, himself, gives to all mankind life and breath and everything, and he made from one man,’” – that’s Adam – “‘Every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God in the hope that he might feel – that they might, rather, feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us for,’” – quotes up Amenities from 600 BC — “‘In him we live and move and have our being, and as some of your own poets,’” – or your own rock

stars – “Have said,” – he quotes Eratos from 300 BC – “For we are indeed his offspring.”

Now what Paul is doing here, he’s contextualizing the Gospel. He goes to their place, speaks their language. He puts his argument together in their form, philosophically, of understanding. He quotes their own poets, their own rock stars, as it were, because he’s trying to contextualize the Gospel. What we’re not talking about here is changing the doctrine, but contextualizing the style: allowing people to meet Jesus without lots of cultural baggage and inhibitors. Paul says it this way, in I Corinthians 9. “I became all things to all men so that by all means I might save as many as possible. I do this all for the sake of the Gospel that I may share in its blessings.” Again, doctrine doesn’t change, but methodology does.

Timeless truth, timely method, and here’s the truth, and this is where traditional or establishing churches – back to the question – this is where they freak out. You can’t change the way we do church, because that will be compromised. My answer is no. Every single church is culturally contextualized. For example, pews didn’t come into existence until the 13th century. Before that, all Christians stood for their church service. So any church that’s sitting down is experiencing a cultural contextualization of the Gospel. Any church that has mass-print Bibles, hymnals, books for sale, they’re experiencing a 15th-century contextualization of the Gospel, whereby the printing press was invented by Johan Gutenberg. Before that, there was no such thing as mass-market printing and media.

Additionally, fast-forward to the 19th century – late-19th century. At that point, what is invented and the church benefits from is sound systems and PAs. So any church that has a sound system is experiencing a 19th-century contextualization. Fast-forward to the 20th century, anyone who listens to a radio preacher is experiencing a 20th-century innovation. In 1995, the internet went public. Anyone who logs onto a website to find the church they want to attend is experiencing a 1995 – 20th-century technological contextualization of the Gospel, and, so, my point is simply this. It’s not whether or not a church contextualizes. It’s to what year. Get my point? Some churches are on the cutting edge of the 17th century, right on the cutting-edge. Right? If you walk into a church that doesn’t do screens, it’s not on the edge of the 21st century.

And I’m not saying it’s sinful, bad, or wrong, but there are more televisions than people in America, and people live with a screen, between their computer and their television and their phone and whatever multimedia device they have. Screens are a 21st-century adaptation of technology for Christian faith. We use them rightly. If you walk into a church and, you know, the guy’s really happy. Tucks his shirt in, has feathered hair, a polo shirt, and, you know, is real happy and has shadow fonts for all of his PowerPoint, he’s – that’s the 1980s, right? I mean, you know that. You’re going, “That’s ‘86. I love Don Johnson. Rock,” – you know, and, you know, “I can moonwalk. This is awesome. I feel at home.” So, you know, every church is contextualized to a time. The question is: is it most effective? Is it most efficient?

Is it lowering the threshold of accessibility to church and Jesus and the teaching of the Bible? That’s why at Mars Hill, we have our own music. We write our own songs. That’s why I speak English. I don’t speak “Dearly Beloved-ism.” I get in trouble for this all the time. “Dearly Beloved-ism” is the guy who gets up and, “Dearly Beloved.” One of the first churches I went to as a new Christian, guy got up. He’s like, “Dearly beloved.” I’m like, “Beloved? I just got here, man. We’re not beloved, dude. You and me — that weirds me out,” and he’s like, “And I – we’re gonna beseech the,” – beseech? Does that – that sounds like it’ll hurt; I don’t know if I wanna be beseeched. I don’t know what we’re talking about here. You gotta speak English. My dad’s a construction worker and I just rolled in. You know, I don’t know what we’re talking about.

If he had got up and said, “Welcome,” I would’ve been like, “Okay, now I’m with you.” “Dear God,” – okay, I’m with you, but the holy beloved-ism is just weird, right? I don’t speak holy beloved-ism. There’s a reason for that. I dress in regular clothes – at least what I consider to be regular clothes, right? I don’t come in a suit, because I don’t like them and I think the Jesus t-shirts are funny and this one is from Urban Outfitters. It’s Deejay Jazzy Jesus and we’re – and if you think about it, here’s what’s weird. At Urban Outfitters, they’re selling Jesus t-shirts, but if you ask the kid selling the Jesus t-shirts, “Is there a t-shirt of his mother, Mary?” They believe in the virgin birth. I mean, bizarre – Urban Outfitters does and emerging pastors are like, “I don’t know.” We’ll go to Urban Outfitters and ask the non-Christian in the Virgin Mary t-shirt.

He’ll tell you it happened, even though he’s going to hell wearing the Virgin Mary shirt, at least he’s got that settled. I mean, it’s just weird. It’s just a weird day. That’s my point, and that’s why we have a website, and that’s why we use technology. And that’s why we use video. It’s all just cultural adaptation so more people could meet Jesus. That’s all. All right. It includes service times, as well. So, you know, our campuses have different service times, but, like, at this campus, we got two morning, three evenings. What time’s the last one? 8:30 p.m., because our city is filled with single people who can’t get up until the crack of dinner, right? So we’re gonna reach them, but, seriously, I’m preaching the 8:30. We started this service not too long ago. People continually show up late with bed head. Like, “Ah, it’s 9:00.”

It’s like, “It’s 9:00. What were you doing?” “I don’t know. I don’t know. I,” – all right. Welcome all you guild leaders. You know, Jesus died for you, too. Gee whiz, I mean, it’s crazy. So – but it’s just trying to find ways to welcome everybody and love them. Okay, you got the point. Verse 29: contextualization. Verse 29, “‘Being then God’s offspring,’ Paul says, ‘We ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone or an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.’” Now he’s getting kind of Fundamentalist, “‘Because he has fixed today on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man,’” – that’s Jesus – “‘Whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.’” That’s the resurrection of Jesus.

In addition to contextualizing, Paul is here also contending for the Gospel. He says it this way in Jude 3, “To contend for the faith that was once, for all, delivered, to the Christian saints.” That means not only we – do we try and do Christianity in a way that’s culturally accessible. We also need to make sure that we defend the distinctive truth claims of the Bible, Jesus, and the historic Christian faith. Here, what he is saying is, first of all, Zeus is not god. Jesus is. First thing: there’s one God. His name is Jesus. That was very controversial. Secondly, he said God is the Creator, and he made the earth and all the people on it. That was controversial because they believed essentially in an eternal universe. They didn’t believe that there was a Creator or creation.

He said, "Furthermore, you are all sinners," and they didn't believe that. "And you need to repent of your sin," and they didn't believe that, and he said, "If you don't, you'll be judged by Jesus in the end. He's the one who rose from death." They didn't believe that God made them. They didn't believe they were sinners. They didn't believe they needed to repent. They didn't believe that God would judge them. They didn't believe anyone rose from death, and they didn't believe there was any eternal consequence, like heaven or hell, and Paul here is contending. He's saying, "This is really what the Bible says. This really is what Jesus taught. This really is what Christians believe. This really is the heart of all that it means to be a faithful Christian."

And, so, in as much as possible, we can contextualize, but at certain points, we cannot change what we believe, because that would cause us to be false teachers, heretics, and compromisers, and we need to be contenders. Contenders for what is true. Now, in saying this, I believe part of the problem with what is known as the emerging church is what my friend, D.A. Carson, outlined in a book on I Corinthians and he said that, "One generation believes something. The next generation assumes it, and the third generation denies it." That's what's happening. There was a day where the Bible and Jesus and the Trinity and sin and heaven and hell was believed, and then there was the proliferation of sort of soft – what we'll call "seeker churches" that didn't deny those things, but just sort of assumed them and didn't stress them.

Now their children raise up and they deny them, and that's what's happening, which is why contending is so incredibly important. To make sure that we clearly declare what it means to be Christian, and so I'll tell you. There is one God. There is one God and he is the Maker of heaven and earth, and he made us in his image and likeness, male and female, with dignity, value, worth, and purpose. He made us to worship and we chose to sin against him; to rebel against him; to disobey him. As a result, we are separated from God and we live under the foolish myth that, to some degree, we are each our own god declaring right and wrong and living our own life by our own standards, and that God lovingly came into human history as the man, Jesus Christ, fully God, fully man.

That he was born of a virgin and he lived a life without sin, though he was tempted in every way as we are, and he went to the cross and there he substituted himself. Our first parents in the garden substituted themselves for God, and, at the cross, Jesus reversed that substitution and substituted himself for sinners, and, when Jesus went to the cross, he took willingly upon him the sin of those who would come to trust in him. That means me, as a sinner, Jesus went to the cross and took upon himself all my sin, past, present, and future, and Jesus Christ – God, who was a man – died in my place for my sins, paying my debt to God and purchasing my salvation. Jesus' dead body was then laid in a tomb and for three days he was buried. On the third day, a Sunday, which is why we worship on that day – Jesus rose in victory over Satan, sin, death, demons, and hell.

And he commissioned us with the Holy Spirit to be missionaries telling this amazingly good news that there's a God who passionately, lovingly, continually, relentlessly pursues us, and he ascended into heaven, and, today, Jesus is alive and well. And he's seated on a throne, and he is ruling and reigning over all nations and all cultures and all philosophies and all races and all periods of time. He is ruling over moderns and post-moderns and women and men and children and the elderly and the rich and the poor and the wise and the simple and the black and the white and those who are living and those who are dead and those who have been born and those who will be born, and he is King of Kings and he is Lord of Lords, and he is ruling and reigning over all people, commanding everyone everywhere to repent of everything.

And he is coming again to judge the living and the dead, and those who trust in him will enjoy eternity in his Kingdom of heaven forever, and those who do not will suffer apart from him in the conscience eternal torments of hell. That is what we believe. We believe in Jesus, and I know that some of you don't like that, and the case was the same in the days of Paul, which brings me to my last point. That – he says it this way – Luke does. "Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. Others said, 'We will hear you again about this,' so Paul went out from their midst, but some men joined them and believe. Among whom were Dionysius of the Aeropagus" – a member of the Mars Hill court, "and woman named Damaris" – probably a common woman – "and others with them."

When Jesus is lifted up; when Jesus is made much of; when Jesus' name is declared with authority and power, not just as our example but as our savior; not just as our example, but our redeemer; not just as our example, but as our King of Kings and Lord of Lords; there are three reactions. One is contempt, as Paul experienced. Roll their eyes and reject the option and said, "This is ridiculous. This is old religion. This is Christianity. We're tired of this. Have you nothing new?" No, there is no such thing as a new kind of Christian. There's just Christians who love Jesus, believe the Bible, repent of sin and trust in him alone. There are those that have contempt. There are others who have curiosity.

Perhaps some of you have contempt. You're like, "I can't believe I got drug here by my friend. He just told me I was going to hell. I knew he was a Fundamentalist. I knew it." No, I love you. You're going to hell, but I love you and you don't need to go to hell. Some of you say, "I don't like hell." Great, Jesus, now you don't need to go to hell. You're welcome. Now, for those of you who have curiosity, right? Ask your friends who are Christians and brought you. Join a community group. Come forward for prayer afterward. Send in your questions via email. Let us answer your questions. Continue to pursue your curiosity, and if you pursue the truth, you'll end up worshiping, loving, knowing Jesus, and some are converted.

Some say, "You know what? I believe in Jesus. I believe he lived, died, rose in my place for my sins. He's my great God the Savior, and I want him to change my life now, and I want my life to be lived with him forever." If that's you, we would beg – implore you to give your life to Jesus today; to confess your sins and trust in him; become a Christian. You can do that in prayer in your seat. Jesus. The emerging church will come and go. The traditional church will come and go. The Church of Jesus Christ will continue on, because Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So here's my promise to you, Mars Hill. We will always be about Jesus, as long as I'm here.

Furthermore, we'll do all we can to welcome as many as we can through as many cultural mediums and adaptations that we possibly can to know the Jesus of the Bible, without changing any of our doctrinal convictions, because our goal is not just to be fruitful. It's also to be faithful. For those of you who are Christian, we would call you today to repent of sin and continue to trust in Jesus. For those of you who are non-Christians today, we would

encourage you to become Christians, to repent of sin, trust in Jesus, and we're now going to give you an opportunity to respond. A couple ways that we do that at Mars Hill: prayer and repentance. Get things right between you and God. If you are a Christian, you are welcome to come forward and take communion which us – with us, which is remembering the body and blood of Jesus who takes away sin and gives us salvation.

Give of your tithes and offerings so that the ministry of Jesus can continue, and, lastly, we're going to stay and we're going to sing and we're going to celebrate. We'll raise our hands. We'll raise our voices. We'll raise our hearts and our minds to Jesus. He's alive and well and unlike anyone and anything, he is worthy of all worship and praise, and, so, now is your chance, Mars Hill, to worship Jesus. To make much of his name in a place that desperately needs to know how absolutely altogether wonderful he is. Amen?

Response: Amen.

Thank you. I'll pray. Lord Jesus, we are all about you. We're only about you. We're continually about you. We're thoroughly about you. May your name be made much of. May your fame be declared to the city and the nations. Lord, Jesus, may your people speak of the goodness of your Work in their life. Holy Spirit, I ask that if there are any here that do not know love, serve, belong to, adore, trust in, follow Jesus, that you would give them hearts to receive, minds to believe, wills to desire to do so. Lord Jesus, for those who do know you, it is my prayer that the heart of this church will continually burn for you. That our Bibles would be open; that our hearts would be humble; and that our city would be changed for your glory and our joy. We ask this in your name. Amen.